

This edition of **Certification Corner** features news about the NOCA annual meeting, the advertorial appearing in other massage publications, and answers to two common questions about certification.

by **Elliot Greene**

I recently attended the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA) annual meeting as a representative of the National Certification Program for Massage Therapists and as AMTA's delegate. The theme of the meeting was *Certification Strategies for the 90's* and featured several educational sessions on topics about professional certification.

Over 125 delegates representing certifying agencies were in attendance. It was a great opportunity for networking. Several attendees commented that their image of massage therapy had been favorably affected by learning about our commitment to begin a certification program and by seeing a copy of the *Update on the National Certification Program for Massage Therapists*.

AMTA is an organizational member of NOCA and enjoys the benefits of access to publications, conferences, and resources specifically for health care certifying agencies. ***NOCA has a set of standards with which approval of certifying agencies is granted by a branch of NOCA, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). The National Certification Program is being designed using these standards.***

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An advertorial entitled "Certification, Professional Development and Your Freedom to Practice Massage" appeared in the January/February issue of *Massage* magazine. The AMTA placed the advertorial to give

its readership an opportunity to have accurate information about the National Certification Program and to keep as many people informed as possible. A reply card accompanied the advertorial and several hundred have been returned as of this writing.

The advertorial is also being offered as a public service announcement to AMTA chapter newsletters and the publications of several other massage organizations.

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I would like to cover two typical questions about certification.

Q. If I'm an Active AMTA member, will I have to take the exam to be certified or will I be grandfathered in?

A. Grandfathering is defined as a process allowing experienced individuals to receive certification status without requiring them to engage in the activities required for certification (such as take the exam) and/or meet the prerequisite standard qualifications of applicants. The Steering Committee will be studying this issue carefully before this policy is decided. There is a wide range of opinions about grandfathering. Some feel it enhances support for certification, while others feel grandfathering diminishes the effectiveness and credibility of a certification program. Basically, the answer is it's yet to be determined.

Q. I've heard some members refer to being certified by the AMTA. As an Active member, am I certified or not?

A. The main cause of confusion is that certification is a term that has several levels of meaning. In its simplest sense, to certify means to attest that someone or something has met a certain standard of quality. One might say that AMTA certifies Active members because those individuals must satisfy certain membership qualifications. If the AMTA includes you as a member, then it is "certifying" (i.e., attesting or verifying) that you graduated from an approved program and/or passed the membership entrance exam.

However, the major societal institutions - professional, educational, governmental, etc., - utilize the term certification in a different, more sophisticated and specific manner. Certain guidelines for **professional** certification programs have come to be established and accepted by both the private and governmental sectors. In order to be recognized as a valid professional certification, a program should meet or exceed these guidelines. The AMTA membership exam was never intended or designed to meet these contem-

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porary standards for professional certification programs. The National Certification Program for Massage Therapists *will* be so designed.

What can be confusing is, on one hand, you could informally say AMTA membership is a form of certification. Yet, on the other hand, it's **not**, because it wouldn't be regarded as professional certification by those who use the term in its more sophisticated, formal way.

It would be more precise to say that the AMTA verifies individuals as being **Active members**, while the National Certification Program will certify individuals as being **massage therapists**. Similarly, that is why the exam that one may take to qualify as an Active member is more properly called the AMTA membership entrance exam, rather than a certification exam.

The AMTA membership certificate itself may have added to the confusion since it begins with the phrase, "This certifies that..." In order to prevent such confusion, the AMTA National Board of Directors approved amending the membership certificates (effective next year) to begin with, "This *verifies* that..."

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Things should really start rolling after the National Certification Steering Committee meeting on March 2, 3 and 4. Be sure to read all about it in "Certification Corner" in the next issue of *Hands On!* ♦

Fingerprints

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Massage Therapy Journal Editor Rafael Tuburan has moved! Please send all editorial materials to him at:

331 North F Street
Lake Worth, FL 33460
(407) 582-7923



All ads for the *Massage Therapy Journal* should be sent to:

Linda Falzone, Art Director
1702 North Main Street
Rockford, IL 61103
Office: (815) 965-1133
FAX: (815) 965-2329



This marked the first issue of *Hands On* where we literally had almost double the amount of information we could use. My sincere appreciation to all the members, schools, unit, chapter and national officers who sent information. I'm sorry we were not able to publish everything submitted. As you can see, the newsletter has expanded to 20 pages and we are now in the process of rethinking the format of future issues to best serve your membership needs. ♦

From the National Certification Steering Committee...

For those of you who sent in reply cards to the *Update on the National Certification Program for Massage Therapists*, your name will be placed on a priority list to receive an application to sit for the Certification Exam. This information will be available a few months before the test will be given. We estimate that the first test will be administered between late 1991 and early 1992.

Thanks to the individuals and members who sent in cards. The information you provided was very valuable to the project.